

**In the Claims**

Please cancel claims 5-6 and 8-9, and amend the claims in the manner indicated.

1. (currently amended) A process comprising:

forming a metal interconnect structure onto a substrate, said metal interconnect structure extending above a surface of the substrate;

forming, subsequent to said forming a metal interconnect structure, a carbon-doped oxide (CDO) layer with a first concentration of carbon dopants therein on said substrate and between elements of said metal interconnect structure; and

continuing to form, subsequent to said forming a CDO layer with a first concentration of carbon dopants, said CDO layer further above said metal interconnect structure with a second concentration of carbon dopants therein, wherein the first concentration is ~~different~~ higher than the second concentration.

2. (previously amended) The process according to Claim 1 further comprising:

forming, subsequent to said continuing to form, the CDO layer further with a third concentration of carbon dopants therein, wherein there is a linear correlation of the concentration of carbon dopants between the first concentration, the second concentration, and the third concentration.

3. (previously amended) The process according to Claim 1 further comprising:  
forming the CDO layer further with a third concentration of carbon dopants therein, wherein the first and third concentrations are higher than the second concentration.
4. (previously amended) The process according to Claim 1 further comprising:  
forming the CDO layer further with a third concentration of carbon dopants therein, wherein the first and third concentrations are lower than the second concentration.
- 5-6. (cancelled)
7. (currently amended) A process comprising:  
forming a carbon-doped oxide (CDO) layer with a concentration of carbon dopants therein;  
wherein the concentration varies substantially linearly from a ~~top~~ higher concentration in an initially-deposited portion of the CDO layer proximal to a metal interconnect to a ~~bottom~~ lower concentration in a subsequently-deposited portion of the CDO layer distal to the metal interconnect.
- 8-9. (cancelled)

10. (original) The process according to Claim 7 wherein the concentration varies between about 1 percent and about 20 percent by atomic mass.

11-23. (cancelled)

27-33. (withdrawn)